



Egyptian-Chinese Mission at Montu Temple of Karnak

**Report
2019-2020**



中埃卡尔纳克孟图神庙联合考古

Louxor 2020

The second season of fieldwork of the Egypt-China joint archeological mission took place on 7 December 2019 to 30 March 2020, in the cooperation between Ministry of Antiquities of Egypt (MoA) and the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Under the co-direction of Dr. Ayman Ashmawy (Head of Egyptian & Greco-Roman Antiquities Sector, MoA) and Dr. Wang Wei (Academician, Institute of Archaeology, CASS), the team was composed of multiple specialists from the two parties, and supervised by two executive directors on the field (see list). Three inspectors were also represented from the Ministry of Antiquities on the field during the whole mission: Salwa Nour, Asmaa Ahmed, Kerema Gamal, Hala Ghairb and Fatma Mohamed. Almost 80 workmen and Quftis worked for this season and were organized by Rais Mohammed Farouk. In addition, two PhD students, Wang Chaoying (Oxford University) and Zhang Lingxin (John Hopkins University), took part in the fieldwork during one month.

Dr. Mostafa AlSaghir	Executive director	Director of Karnak Temple
Dr. Jia Xiaobing	Executive director	Director of Prehistory Departement, Institute of Archaeology, CASS
<i>Team Members (Alphabet order)</i>		
Dr. Ahmed Tahrir	Archaeologist	Inspector of MoA
Mr. Ali Mohamed Ali	Archaeologist	Inspector of MoA
Mr. Gao Wei	Egyptologist	Institute of Archaeology, CASS
Mme. Hend Aly Amin	Egyptologist	Chief Inspector of the Montu Temple
Mr. Hosny Abdel Wahab	Egyptologist	Director of the Montu Temple
Mr. Ibrarim Mostafa	Photogrammetry surveyor	Inspector of MoA
Prof. Jin Shoufu	Egyptologist	Fudan University
Mr. Liu Qingbin	Archaeologist	Zhengzhou Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology
Mr. Mohamed Yahyah	Archaeologist	Director of Antiquities of Upper-Egypt

Mme. Nermeen Aba Yazeed	Ceramologist	Inspector of MoA
Mr. Khazafi Raheem	Archaeologist	Director of Antiquities of Luxor
Mr. Saad Bakhit	Egyptologist	Director of excavation, Karnak Temple
Dr. Wang Di	Archaeologist	Institute of Archaeology, CASS
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We like to, first of all, express our deep gratitude to Dr. Khaled El-Enany - Minister of Antiquities, Dr. Mostafa Wazeri - the Secretary General of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, and Dr. Ayman Ashmawy - Head of Egyptian & Greco-Roman Antiquities Sector, for their trust, support and help throughout the mission. We like to thank also Mr. Mohamed Yahyah - Director of Antiquities of Upper-Egypt and Mr. Khazafi Raheem - Director of Antiquities of Luxor.

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1. Excavations

The excavations of the 2019-2020 season focus on two separate areas: the Osirian Chapels (Area 1) and the junction between Montu Temple and Maat Temple (Area 2).

Area 1: Osirian chapels and the south enclosure wall

The Osirian chapel is an important type of the ritual construction dedicated to the god Osiris, during the First Millennium B.C. in Karnak complex. But the studies related were very limited. The main aims of this season are, 1) focus research on the third chapel - least known of the six; 2) discovery the background of the chapel area where barely studied before; 3) clarify the space in front of the second Chapel, of which only the main building has been studied in the 1940s.

The remains of the **third chapel** (CH3) built by sandstone and measured 6.9 by 5.6 meters. It consists of two rooms side by side, both oriented to the south, with two doorway opening on the south wall of each room. A significant quantity of the blocks with inscriptions and images were discovered in the east room (CH3-2: 2.4 x 4.8 m). Some are even *in situ* or have burned evidence on the surface. A. Mariette mentioned in his publication *Karnak* (page 9) that a scene of the king without cartouche worshipping the Hathor cow of Dendera could be seen on the wall. However, this scene didn't survived today. According to the observation, the east room was probably decorated inside with the painted bas-relief scenes while the outside surface with the white plaster. Some fragments show that the principal scene of east room presents a priestess (left), probably the god's wife wearing a tunic dress, facing to the Karnak triad, the god of Amun, Mut and Khonsu (right). The specific slanted sceptre that held in the left hand of Amun might relate to the sceptre of million years hanging the Sed festival signs on the top. However, no remains of inscription or relief was observed in the west room (CH3-1), even it is bigger than the east one (2.7 x 4.8 m). A pavement is located in front of the rooms, led by a ramp which inclines downward to the

non-epigraphic sandstone gate on the south enclosure wall. Four columns bases assembled by sandstone were also discovered on sides of the ramp. The situation of the remains of the third chapel is unoptimistic, the consolidation and conservation works are indispensable while their emergence from the sands.

The **northern part** of the chapel sector was occupied by a heap of modern debris. After the cleaning, a west-east mudbrick wall, more than three meters width, has been discovered. Its western part joins to the west enclosure wall of the Montu precinct and it extends to the east, unparallelly with the south enclosure wall. The fonction and the date are not clear, it seems that this mudbrick wall might protect from the backside of the osirian chapels.

The area between the second chapel - the Chapel of Amenardis I and its sandstone gate has been excavated during this season. A paved courtyard with four granite column bases was discovered. The inscription decorated on one of the column bases confirms the chapel was dedicated to Osiris, the Lord of life (*neb ankh*), with two cartouches of Amenardis I, Divine Adoratrice of Amun. Her cartouches have also been found on some granite fragments which probably belong to a group statue.

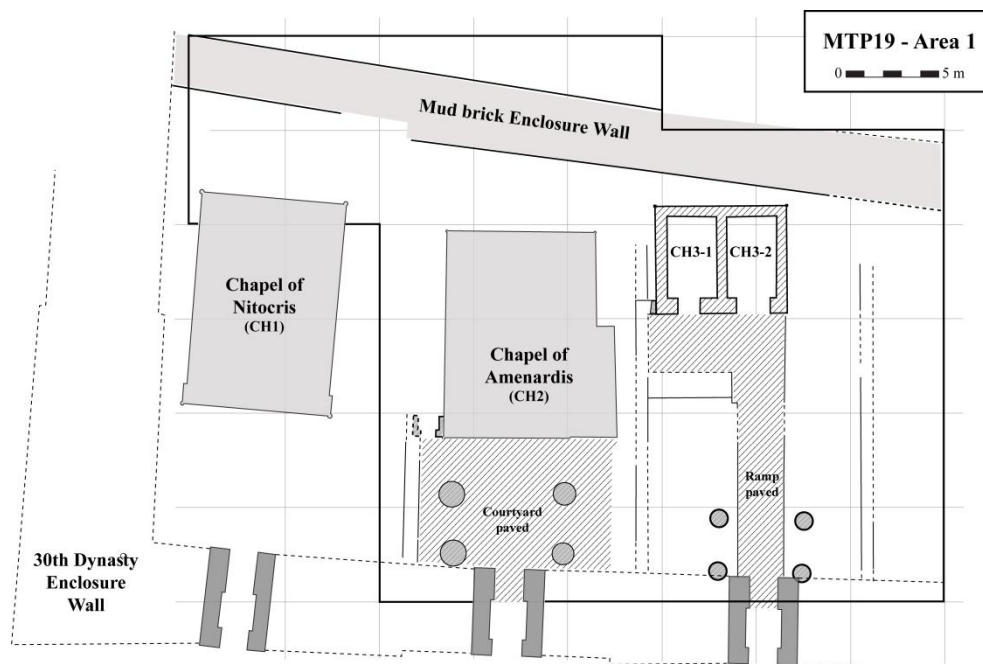


Fig. 1 Excavation plan of the area 1 © MTP



Fig. 2 Area 1 : view from the west enclosure wall of Montu © MTP

Area 2: West joint part of Montu temple and Maat temple

Area 2 is located on the west side of the Maat Temple and the Montu Temple. The objective is to clarify, 1) the relation between these two monuments; 2) the foundation of the Maat Temple and its date; 3) the spatial organization outside the temples.

The excavation revealed several occupation phases. One of the earliest constructions corresponds to a mud-brick ground, semi-buried. Some small wall built directly on this ground seems to separate the space to different rooms. This structure went through to the east under the foundation layer of Maat Temple.

In the second phase, a massif complex mud-brick construction appears 12-14 meters at the west of the Maat Temple. This new construction covered the previous mud-brick ground completely. An L-shaped mud-brick construction uncovered in the south-west sector of our excavation might relate to a later phase. But it seems still remains some connection with the last one.

After the construction of the Maat Temple, a three meters wide mud-brick wall built directly against the foundation of the second pylon has been discovered in the south-east part of our excavation.

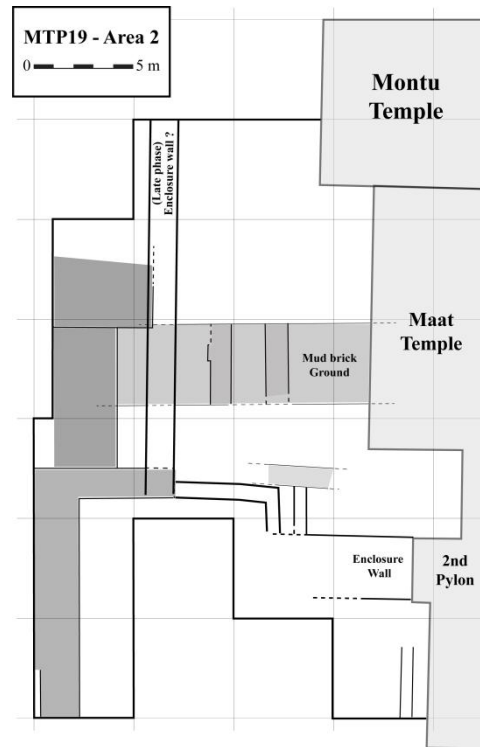


Fig. 3 Excavation plan of the area 2 © MTP



Fig. 4 Area 2 : view to the north © MTP

2. Epigraphic survey

In order to improve our knowledge of the site, it is necessary to check and register all blocks that have been found and left by the previous archaeological missions on the site for decades. Mainly of the blocks have been arranged into different groups in 1970s. They will be reorganized step by step in several years, so it is worthwhile to mention these groups and their current situation as following:



Fig. 5 The different groups of the inscribed blocks on the site

Group (1): on the outside of the northern wall of Amun temple, face to the gate of Maat temple, two new mastabas have been built at the same place of the blocks, for lifting them and protecting them from the erosion of the soil. Some fragments of the limestone torus and the small columns of Amenhotep I are conserved here.

Group (2): the blocks were carefully collected together under the foot of the grand enclosure wall of Amun temple. They are consisted of the fragments of lintels, stelas, capitals and especially the columns of Taharqa, which were discovered at the

portico of the Montu temple in 1940s by Cl. Robichon.

Group (3): four mastabas nearby the south-west corner of the Montu temple preserve numbers of blocks which have been discovered in the foundation of this temple in 1940 by A. Varille.

Group (4): between the Harpre temple and the east enclosure wall, the blocks from the Harpre temple are conserved on a single mastaba along the wall.

Group (5): close to the north mudbrick foundation of the High Structure, and on the west side of the sacred lake, many large-scale architectural elements lay on the ground without order. Some of them need to be conserved because of the damage made by wild grasses and the activities of the dogs.

Group (6): along the inner side of the north enclosure wall, many large-scale blocks, including the fragments of Amenhotep's obelisk and other architectural elements, have been covered by the dust for decades. The west part of this group has been cleaned during this season and six new mastabas are made for the blocks, the same operation will be applied for its east part in the future.

Besides Group (1-6), a variant of blocks scattered around the monuments which located in the precinct of Montu, needs to be collected and registered systematically. In the area outside of the precinct, there are also some blocks hidden under the sturdy wild grasses, especially the northern part of the monumental gate and the north-west area nearby the village Malqata.

During this season, over 400 blocks have been registered by means of the *Blocks Form* of the mission (measures, material, description etc.), half of them have been photographed. This task will be completed in next season and each mastaba of the block group will be documented in a way of photogrammetry, as an example of the mastabas in Group (1).



Fig. 6 3D models of mastaba No. 1 and No. 2 in the Group (1) © MTP

Among the studied blocks, most of the small-scale blocks from the previous missions are absent in the reports titled by "Karnak-Nord". The majority of the blocks in Group (3) can be referenced to the first report (*FIFAO* 19) published by A. Varille with the number of "inventaire" (see figures below). Some others are from the excavations directed by J. Jacquet at the Treasury of Thutmose I. For the blocks that found during this season, they are also registered and photographed but the result is limited unless the further studies.

The inscription team directed by Dr. Mostafa AlSaghir, consists of Wei Gao, Hend Ali and Lixin Zhang.



Inventaire 219.
Colonne engagée d'Amenhotep III remplacée par Amenhotep III.
TEMPLE DE MOSTOU.



Fig. 7 A doorjam of Amenhotep III conserve on mastaba No. 4 in Group (3) - Varille's Inventaire 219

LES DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DU CAIRE, T. XIX.



A. — Décoration murale. — Inventaire 708. Face A.



Fig. 8 A limestone block of Amenhotep I conserve in the Open Air Museum of Karnak Temple - Varille's Inventaire 708.

3. Restorations and Conservations

An 8-people restoration team took part in the fieldwork on 20/1/2020, directed by Mr. AbdEl Rady, from the Restoration Department of Karnak Temple. Many treatment processes have been applied at the second chapel (CH2) and the third chapel (CH3), also the imperative operation for some fragile finds.

Documentation

The restoration team recorded all decays types and treatment processes at CH2 walls using photo shop program as this example



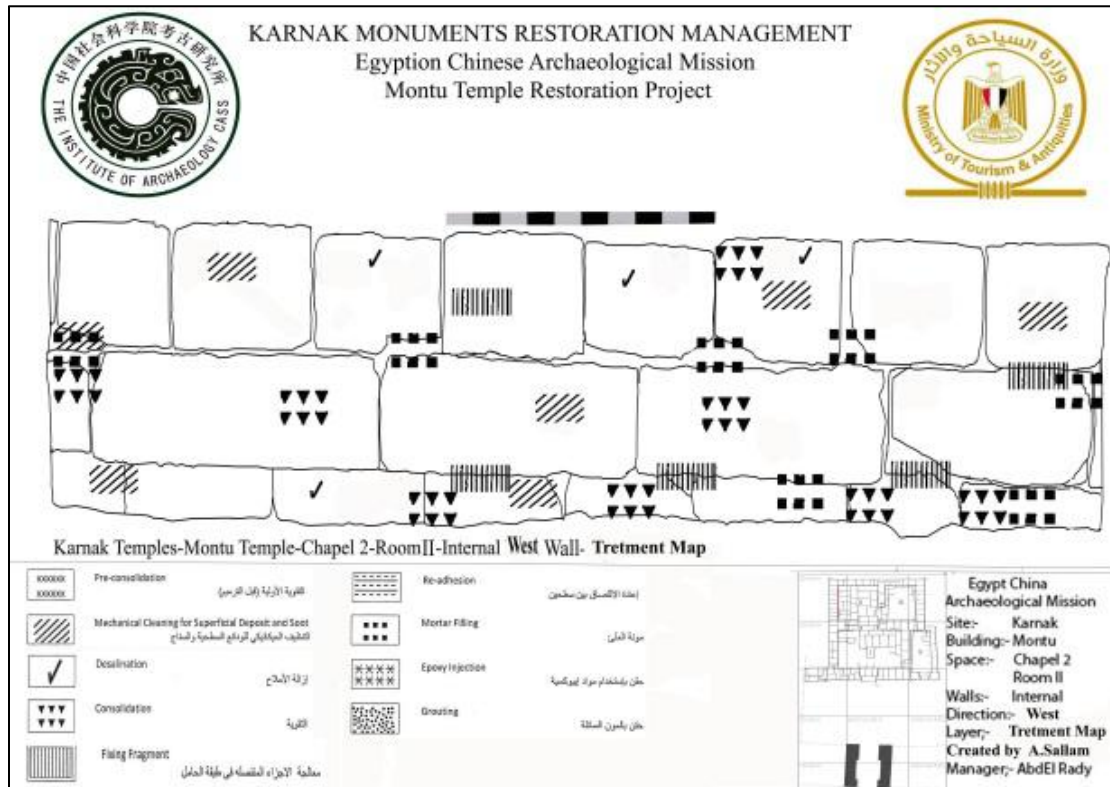


Fig. 9 Documentation of the internal west wall of Room II, the second chapel

Restoration processes

The restoration team applied the mechanical cleaning for all CH2 blocks and joints, also this process applied for some areas from CH3 and some small objects. Also the team applied consolidation process for all stones and plaster layers that have been cleaned





Fig. 10 During mechanical process at CH2, CH3 and small objects inside the lap. © MTP



Fig. 11 During apply consolidation process at CH2 sandstone blocks © MTP

Due to the fragmentation of most of the chapel's stones, many parts of the stones have been re-connected in original place. And many weak areas and cracks were injected with adhesives and fillers.



Fig. 12 During injection process and re connecting of fragments © MTP

The remains of original joints mortar was consolidated but the open joints and the gaps are filled with new lime mortar. **(Ahmed Sallam, Abdel Rady)**



Fig. 13 During filling the joints and the gaps with new lime mortar © MTP



Fig. 14 Photos explains walls condition before and during restoration processes © MTP

4. Photogrammetry

This method is broadly applied to the fieldworks for recording data of the remains. For example, the stratigraphic information of the grids, the documentation of the monument before and after excavation, and the objects/blocks found during the excavation in case of need.

Meanwhile, the photogrammetry was also applied for the topography of the site. This work aims to reproduce a 3D model that shows a panoramic view of the Montu precinct, in the condition of lacking in the drone. During the first two seasons, the main monuments of the Montu precinct have been documented photogrammetrically as a 3D model file, including that of the Montu temple which takes over 8000 photos and created by Ibrahim Mostafa.

5. Improvement of the site

Instead of the previous offices built between the gates opened on the southern enclosure wall, a series of the new offices have been set up under the foot of the northern wall of the grand Amun temple, including the meeting room, the laboratory, the storeroom, the offices for inspectors and team members and other annexes. All the rooms are equipped and the laboratory could be used for ceramic studies and also some restoration works. The improvement of the site of the Montu temple is a sort of continuous work which depends on the necessity in the future.



Fig. 15 New offices and storerooms on the site © MTP

The mission also took advantage of the nature of the site and recycled the rubble resulting from excavation work, and re-used it in making mud bricks, which can be used in the work of rebuilding mud buildings, such as fences, walls, and mud-brick foundations, in addition to using them to cover and protect the excavation sites after the end of the season.



Fig. 16 Processes of making Mud-bricks © MTP

The ceramic studies start to carry out this season by Nermeen Aba Yazeed, which focus on the layers of a grid nearby the second osirian chapel (CH2), and provide a preliminary result of the ceramic in this area. Further studies of quantities of ceramic sherds are in progress.